

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (currently amended): A vacuum sampling tube

which is a sampling vessel ~~comprising~~ consisting of

two tubular casings differing in size and each having a closed bottom and an opening at the other end as assembled together in the manner of a nest of boxes,

in which

1) the inner casing of the nest of boxes is sealed gas-tight at its open end by a gas-barrier, needle hole-sealable plug, whereby a negative pressure state is kept within said casing,

2) the outer casing of the nest of boxes does not have a plug, and is substantially not in contact with an outer bottom surface of said inner casing of the nest of boxes but is detachably associated at the open end of said outer casing with an outer peripheral surface of said inner casing in the vicinity of its open end in substantially liquid-tight relation, and

3) a specimen-pretreating reagent is accommodated in a space between said inner casing and said outer casing.

2. (currently amended): A vacuum sampling tube

which is a sampling vessel ~~comprising~~ consisting of

a tubular casing having a closed bottom and an opening at the other end and

a cylinder having openings at both ends as assembled in said casing in the manner of a nest of boxes,

in which

1) the open top end of the inner cylinder of the nest of boxes is sealed gas-tight by a gas-barrier, needle hole-sealable plug,

2) said cylinder is detachably associated, respectively, with the open end of said tubular casing in the vicinity of its open top end in substantially liquid-tight relation and with a plug means of said tubular casing in the vicinity of its open bottom end in substantially gas-tight relation,

3) a negative pressure state is kept within said cylinder, and

4) a specimen-pretreating reagent is accommodated in the space between said cylinder and said tubular casing, and

5) said tubular casing does not have a plug.

3. (currently amended): A vacuum sampling tube  
which is a sampling vessel ~~comprising~~ consisting of  
a tubular casing having a closed bottom and an opening at the other end and  
a cylinder having openings at both ends as assembled in said casing in the manner of a nest of boxes,

in which

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1) the open top end of the inner cylinder of the nest of boxes is sealed gas-tight by a gas-barrier, needle hole-sealable plug,

2) said cylinder is detachably associated, respectively, with the open end of said tubular casing in the vicinity of its open top end in substantially liquid-tight relation and with a plug means of said tubular casing in the vicinity of its open bottom end in substantially gas-tight relation,

3) said open bottom end and said plug means are provided with complementary notches and by bringing said cylinder into sliding rotation about its axis, internal spaces of said cylinder and said casing are reversibly brought into communication or out of communication,

4) a negative pressure state is kept within said cylinder, and

5) a specimen-pretreating reagent is accommodated in a space between said cylinder and said casing surrounding the outside thereof, and

6) said tubular casing does not have a plug.

4. (currently amended): A vacuum sampling tube  
which is a sampling vessel ~~comprising~~ consisting of  
a tubular casing having a closed bottom and an opening at the other end and  
a cylinder having openings at both ends as assembled in said casing in the manner of a  
nest of boxes,

in which

1) the open top end of the inner cylinder of the nest of boxes is sealed gas-tight by a gas-barrier, needle hole-sealable plug while the open bottom end thereof is sealed gas-tight by a gas-

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barrier member which may be broken through at least locally, whereby a negative pressure state is kept within said cylinder,

2) said cylinder is designed in such manner that its open bottom end faces a plunger member disposed inwardly of the closed bottom end of said tubular casing and, is detachably and slidably associated with the open end of said tubular casing in substantially liquid-tight relation in the vicinity of its open top end, and

3) a specimen-pretreating reagent is accommodated in a space between said cylinder and said tubular casing, and

said tubular casing does not have a plug.

5. (original): A vacuum sampling method

which comprises

using the vacuum sampling tube according to Claim 1 and collecting a specimen by vacuum into said inner casing

followed by causing said inner casing to be dissociated from said outer casing, and

adding the specimen in said inner casing to a pretreating reagent in said outer casing.

6. (original): A vacuum sampling method

which comprises

using the vacuum sampling tube according to Claim 2 and collecting a specimen by vacuum into said cylinder

followed by causing said cylinder and said tubular casing to slide axially to dissociate the open bottom end of said cylinder from said plug means,

thereby introducing the specimen in said cylinder into a pretreating reagent in said tubular casing.

7. (original): A vacuum sampling method

which comprises

using the vacuum sampling tube according to Claim 3 and collecting a specimen by vacuum into the cylinder

followed by bringing said cylinder and said tubular casing into relative rotation about the axis to substantially align the notch of the open bottom end of said cylinder with the notch of said plug means,

thereby bringing internal spaces of said cylinder and said casing into communication and introducing the specimen in said cylinder into a pretreating reagent in said casing.

8. (original): A vacuum sampling method

which comprises

using the vacuum sampling tube according to Claim 4 and collecting a specimen by vacuum into said cylinder

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followed by pushing said cylinder into said tubular casing to break the breakable member at the bottom end of said cylinder by the plunger member of said tubular casing,

thereby bringing both internal spaces of said cylinder and said casing into communication and

introducing the specimen in said cylinder into a pretreating reagent in said casing.